

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 03094 120536Z

ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 COME-00 DOE-15 SOE-02
DLOS-09 /113 W

-----099590 130422Z /14

R 120500Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 677

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3094

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PEPR, ID, SN

SUBJ: SUHARTO-LEE TALKS IN BALI

REF: (A) JAKARTA 8665, (B) JAKARTA 8493

1. SUMMARY: MFA OFFICIAL DESCRIBED SUHARTO-LEE TALKS AS BETTER THAN EXPECTED. ALTHOUGH FEW DETAILS GIVEN ON TOPICS DISCUSSED, DEVELOPMENT OF CLOSER PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEE AND SUHARTO APPARENTLY WAS PRIME OBJECTIVE FOR SINGAPORE. POSSIBLE DEMISE OF DIESEL ENGINE PROJECT DID NOT DISTURB SINGAPOREANS. BOTH SIDES HELD SIMILAR VIEWS ON BRUNEI. END SUMMARY.

2. OUTGOING HEAD OF MFA'S SOUTHEAST ASIA DIVISION, PETER CHAN, WHO ACCOMPANIED PRIME MINISTER LEE TO BALI TALKS, TOLD EMBOFF THAT TALKS "WENT OFF BETTER THAN EXPECTED." ASKED FOR DETAILS, HE MENTIONED LEE'S REMARKS TO PRESS ABOUT STARS AND ROCKS,
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ADDING THAT LEE AND SUHARTO SHARE A MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND A COMMON APPROACH TO IT.

3. ON SPECIFIC TOPICS, CHAN COMMENTED THAT THE ASEAN DIESEL PROJECT HAD NOT BEEN A REAL SOURCE OF FRICTION AS IT IS NOT THAT IMPORTANT TO SINGAPORE. SINGAPORE

IS QUITE PREPARED TO GIVE IT UP, HE SAID, AT LEAST WITHIN THE ASEAN FRAMEWORK. ON THE PROPOSAL FOR COOPERATION IN THE BATAM ISLAND PROJECT, CHAN EXPLAINED THAT THE GOS WOULD PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION. BUT THAT ACTUAL PARTICIPATION WOULD BE LEFT TO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. (BATAM IS VIRTUALLY AN OFF-SHORE ISLAND FOR SINGAPORE, LOCATED NEAR SINGAPORE'S OWN OFF-SHORE ISLAND BASED PETROLEUM REFINERIES.)

4. CHAN CONFIRMED THAT BRUNEI HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT BALI. ALTHOUGH THE BRUNEI-UK AGREEMENT HAD NOT YET BEEN CONCLUDED AT THE TIME, BOTH INDONESIA AND SINGAPORE WERE HAPPY WITH THE PROPOSAL FOR INDEPENDENCE FROM THE UK (AND BY IMPLICATION, TEMPORARY RETENTION OF THE GURKHA BATTALION). ASKED ABOUT SINGAPORE'S RELATIONSHIP WITH BRUNEI, CHAN OBSERVED THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SINGAPOREAN PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN BRUNEI, THAT THEIR CURRENCIES ARE LINKED, AND THAT BRUNEI PERMITS SINGAPORE TO TRAIN TROOPS THERE IN JUNGLE WARFARE.

5. FORTHCOMING US-ASEAN MEETING ALSO DISCUSSED IN BALI. CHAN SAID ONLY THAT INDONESIA SHARES SINGAPORE'S VIEW THAT THE MEETING WILL BE USEFUL. THAIS, HE ADDED, ARE THE MOST HESITANT.

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6. IN COMMENTING ON THE SMOOTHNESS OF THE BALI TALKS AND OF THE SINGAPORE-INDONESIA RELATONSHIP IN GENERAL AT THIS TIME, CHAN MENTIONED THAT DECEASED INDONESIAN AMBASSADOR TO SINGAPORE HAERUDDIN TASNING HAD HAD A SPECIAL TALENT FOR HANDLING BILATERAL RELATIONS IN A WAY THAT EASED FRICTION. (EMBASSY COMMENT: TASNING, KILLED IN A HELICOPTER CRASH ON EVE OF TALKS (REF B), WAS WIDELY RESPECTED BY DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES AND SINGAPORE OFFICIALS. WHERE PERSONAL RELATIONS ARE SUCH A CRUCIAL PART OF OFFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND WHEN GENERALS ARE NOT ALWAYS SKILLED DIPLOMATS, AMBASSADOR TASNING'S DEATH WILL BE KEENLY FELT HERE.)
INGRAHAM

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